

LOOKING AT USMLE

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California Board of Podiatric Medicine

BPM is the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) unit licensing DPMs under the State Medical Practice Act.

Sacramento--California law requires applicants to pass the Part I, II, and III exams of the National Board of Podiatric Medical Examiners or “a written examination that is recognized by the board to be the equivalent.”

BPM sponsored this language. It was amended into the law by AB 2743 in 1992, with the United States Medical Licensing Exam (USMLE) specifically in mind.

While we have this statutory authority to accept USMLE, BPM is scheduling public hearings to consider inclusion of similar language in BPM’s regulations to provide more public notice and input.



Dr. Nguyen

USMLE is likely the only exam meeting the equivalency test. Subsequent to BPM’s legislation in 1992, the Legislature made more sweeping changes in 1999 following hearings on other boards.

As a result, Section 139 of the B&P Code and Department of Consumer Affairs policies require licensing exams to test for **entry-level** competence (not ABPS level) and to be based on **occupational analyses** and **exam validation studies** like NBPM and USMLE. There is a bias for uniform, national, written exams. Individual States have neither sufficient resources nor numbers of applicants.

Section 139 requires BPM to certify annually that the exams we accept comply with State law. The Medical Board has been vouching for USMLE already and compliance with the equivalency standard seems self-evident. BPM would have a difficult burden on that point with any other.

At its February 2 meeting, the Board directed staff to include this USMLE item on the agenda for June 1 in Sacramento, so that it can approve a formal public notice of proposed rulemaking. This public session will be held in the State Capitol Building in historic Room 113, Sacramento, commencing at 9:00 AM.

The profession has considered two years of graduate medical education (GME) necessary for entry-level competence since 1995. Since the Legislature made this the licensing

standard in 2004 with AB 932, the existing NBPME Part III exam does not adequately address our needs or the profession's nationwide.

Despite what we thought, the occupational analysis NBPME completed last year remains based on graduation from podiatric medical school only. We need an exam reflecting at least one year of GME and are urging NBPME to move forward expeditiously.

The profession will decide which way it goes, whether maintaining itself as an independent branch or mainstreaming with medicine. BPM only has authority to grant DPM licenses (any applicant ever qualifying for an MD license would apply to the Medical Board).

And BPM is not a party to discussions between the profession and organized medicine about the USMLE. We are simply readying ourselves to accept passing scores from USMLE for DPM applicants should such scores be submitted. To date, sitting for the USMLE has been restricted to medical school grads.

BPM will by law continue to accept National Board scores even if it begins accepting USMLE tests as well, unless the law is changed in that respect.

We recently invited the schools and residency programs to comment and would greatly appreciate hearing from you as well. Please send written comments to Patty Rodriguez, Licensing Coordinator, BPM, 1420 Howe Avenue, Suite 8, Sacramento, CA. 95825 or electronically to:

patty_rodriguez@dca.ca.gov

You are cordially invited to attend the BPM meeting June 1. The agenda will be posted on our website 10 days prior.

If the Board votes at that time to notice a regulatory proposal, further written comments will be invited from all who have requested to be on our public mailing list. And a formal public hearing and vote will be scheduled for October 19 in southern California.



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